



Mental Health Reform

Promoting Improved Mental Health Services

Snapshot Analysis of Budget 2016

14th October 2015

Mental Health Reform has welcomed the Government announcement of **an additional €35 million for primary care and specialist mental health services** in Budget 2016.

Other highlights from the Department of Health allocation for 2016 include:

- **Expanding the Counselling in Primary Care (CIPC) service** including to children under 18 years. This is seen as a positive step in improving early intervention
- **Free GP Care will also be extended to all children under 12**, subject to negotiations with doctors' representatives. This can improve early identification of emotional and behavioural difficulties in children
- **Additional funding for therapies for children**, including speech and language and occupational therapy at primary care level. This may improve access to appropriate therapists to support children with pre-existing mental health difficulties as well as serving as a preventative measure
- **Counselling supports for parents** where their new born child is diagnosed with additional needs, as part of the new National Maternity Strategy.

Despite positive commitments by the Department of Health to the delivery of "more and better quality mental health care in the community in line with *A Vision for Change*", Mental Health Reform has made clear in our public response to the budget that Government must deliver on its commitments and allocated funding needs to be spent to make a real difference to mental health care in Ireland.

Despite the allocation of €125 million to community-based mental health services since this Government came to power in 2011, numbers of staff have only gone up by just over 2%, or 212 posts. We are simply not seeing the promised increase in staffing, and people with mental health difficulties are feeling the impact in difficulties getting access to crisis supports and holistic

therapies. Specialist areas of service provision, including for people with co-morbid mental health and intellectual disability, members of the deaf community and for people who are homeless remain significantly under-developed.

There are still significant shortfalls in resources for mental health services which, at just 6.5% of the health budget in 2015, are still well below the recommended level. The Government faces huge challenges with the recruitment and retention of staff, which it must tackle. Until it does, people will continue to wait too long for vital supports, putting their mental health further at risk and delaying their recovery.

There are no details yet of where the €35 million in budget 2016 will be spent; a detailed service plan for the HSE is expected to be published in November 2015, with an Operational Plan for the Mental Health Division due after that.

There are a number of other measures outlined in Budget 2016 relating to housing, social welfare and education that may have an impact on people with mental health difficulties. Such measures include:

Social welfare (Housing Assistance)

- Restoration of the value of the respite care grant to €1,700
- Increase in fuel allowance by €2.50 to €22.50 a week from January 2016
- Restoring the Christmas Bonus to 75% of its former amount this December for long-term welfare recipients – up from 25% in 2014

Mental Health Reform had called for the restoration of the Back to Work Allowance but this was not reflected in the budget.

Social Housing

- €414 million to social housing
- Allocation of an additional €17 million to address homelessness bringing spend in this area up to €70 million
- Increase in the rent limits for the Homeless HAP Pilot in order to allow homeless families in Dublin to move out of hotel and emergency accommodation and find a home
- Funding for HAP is being increased by €24.5 million to €47.7million in 2016 in line with the expansion of the scheme which has a target to assist an additional 10,000 families to secure suitable accommodation
- The provision of €76 million for the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) will ensure a continued focus on meeting the housing needs of vulnerable

groups with some 450 units to be provided for people with specific needs in 2016

Mental Health Reform had called for a dedicated funding stream for tenancy sustainment support for individuals with long-term mental health difficulties and to transition individuals from supported accommodation to independent living. This is not reflected in the budget.

Children and Youth/ Education

- €8.5 billion is being allocated to education, including to the appointment of 2,260 new teaching posts at primary and post primary level. This will comprise of 600 new resource teachers. This is in addition to the extra 610 special needs assistants and 190 resource teachers already announced this year.
- Teacher pupil ratio will be reduced from 28 to 1 to 27 to 1 in primary schools and from 19 to 1 to 18.7 to 1 in post primary schools.
- 300 posts will be allocated to improving guidance counselling support
- Within Tusla dedicated funding will be allocated for extra social workers

Mental Health Reform had called for resources to implement the national guidelines on mental health promotion and wellbeing. The restoration of 300 guidance counsellor posts will go some way to providing this resource. However, funding is still needed to provide training to teachers.